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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews two of the major issues affecting community colleges, funding and governance, examining them from a systems perspective--specifically in relation to selected theories of organizational learning disabilities and systems archetypes. The first section of the paper provides background on funding and governance issues as they relate to California community colleges. The second and third sections apply Peter Senge's theories of organizational learning disabilities and systems archetypes to actual examples of funding and governance. Two major system issues in funding involve: (1) the external, such as state and federal funding policies, over which colleges feel they have little control; and (2) the internal, regarding the systems colleges develop to allocate resources over which they do have control. In governance, the colleges have in place a system-shared governance that can provide the philosophical basis and practical means of creating a true learning organization. However, participants often have not received the training necessary to make shared governance as effective a decision-making process as it could be. The paper concludes with the assertion that the systems theory approach can be very beneficial in aiding a complex community college system like California's change from a teaching to a learning organization. Contains 11 references. (SJL)

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COMMUNITY COLLEGES AS LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS

INTRODUCTION

It could be argued that there is no point in discussing the relationship between community colleges and learning organizations, that it can and should be assumed that there is a one-to-one relationship between the two. After all, colleges are places of learning. However, there can be a considerable difference between *what* a college does – provide learning – and *how* it goes about it. Community colleges are indeed institutions of learning, but it has become apparent that few are structured in such a way as to be true learning organizations or communities as described by Peter Senge (*The Fifth Discipline*), O'Banion (*A Learning College for the 21st Century*), and others. Yet, it is the explicit goal of many colleges to become learning organizations, defined by Senge as

> organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together. (Senge, 1990, p.3)

Colleges are pursuing this goal because they are no more immune from the forces of a global economy and the rapid pace of change than any other provider of products or services. They must adapt to a world where "the ability to learn faster than your competitors may be the only sustainable competitive advantage" (DeGeus in Senge, 1990, p. 4). And they must prepare for Tidal Wave II, a 30% increase over the next decade in the number of California students seeking access to higher education.

Community Colleges as Learning Organizations

In The Fifth Discipline, Peter Senge identifies seven learning disabilities which exist in all organizations to varying degrees and which can prevent them from becoming successful learning organizations. These are:

1. I am my position
2. The enemy is out there
3. The illusion of taking charge
4. The fixation on events
5. The parable of the boiled frog
6. The delusion of learning from experience
7. The myth of the management team

One of Senge's major points is the need to be aware of structures which hold us prisoner, such as organizational learning disabilities. However, awareness itself is not sufficient. "It [awareness] may lead to solving a problem, but it will not change the thinking that produced the problem in the first place" (Senge, 1990, pp. 94-95). In order to change thinking, Senge calls for managers to think in terms of systems archetypes. Using archetypes will "recondition our perceptions, so as to be more able to see structures at play, and to see the leverage in those structures" (Senge, 1990, p. 95). Senge notes that researchers have identified about a dozen systems archetypes, all of which are made up the basic building blocks of systems: reinforcing processes, balancing process, and delays. These systems archetypes include:

1. Balancing process with delay
2. Limits to growth
3. Shifting the burden
4. Eroding goals
5. Escalation
6. Success to the successful
7. Tragedy of the commons

8. Fixes that fail
9. Growth and underinvestment

The purpose of this paper is to view two of the major issues for community colleges – funding and governance – from a systems perspective, specifically in relation to selected theories of organizational learning disabilities and systems archetypes. The first part of this paper will provide some basic background information about the issues of funding and governance within the California community college system. The second and third parts will apply Senge's theories of organizational learning disabilities and systems archetypes to actual examples of governance and finance.

FUNDING AND GOVERNANCE – SYSTEMIC ISSUES FOR CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

California has the single largest community college system in the United States, with 107 colleges in 71 districts serving over 1.3 million students. It is said to be the largest system of higher education in the world, though it continues to be regulated and funded as if it were a secondary system. Perhaps more so than any other segment of higher education, community colleges have entered a period of significant change as California prepares for Tidal Wave II, a projected surge in student demand that will sorely tax the capacity and capability of the state's system of higher education. It is estimated that within the next 10 years, 500,000 more students, a 30% increase, will seek access to higher education. The community colleges alone will enroll 400,000 or 80% of those students. Slaughter and Williams, co-chairs of the private California Citizens Commission on Higher Education, warn:

> The state needs to reform the structure of community colleges, which is still defined by their pre-Proposition 13 origins. These colleges will be the workhorses during the tidal wave, enrolling more new students than all others combined. They will operate together more effectively and efficiently when their governance resembles that of other colleges and when their resources are focused on students, not on unnecessary layers of decision-making. (Slaughter, 1998, p. 15)

Slaughter and Williams call for a re-examination of the community college system itself. They are two more voices in what is becoming an increasingly strident call for a complete redesign of the system. William H. Pickens, Executive Director of California Citizens Commission on Higher Education, also complains that the California community college system

> is a set of institutions enormously consumed by internal issues and conflicts and turf battles that are barren of an educational result. . . . I like contentiousness and argument and discussion. But when one's entire energy is devoted to that and there is no benefit to the students, you have to say, 'We need to change the structure.' (Archibold, 1997, p. 13)

Terry O'Banion, author of *A Learning College for the 21st Century,* states unequivocally that anything less than radical change is merely "trimming the branches of a dying tree" (O'Banion, 1997, p. 7).

What O'Banion, Williams, Slaughter, and Pickens are critical of is the system itself and especially the subsystems of funding and governance. It can be argued that these two processes consume a disproportionate amount of colleges' time and energy, finite resources which need to be at least equally directed to student outcomes, to learning. Colleges are not unaware of the need to refocus their attention. Indeed, many colleges have created new statements of mission,. philosophy, or goals that stress learning over teaching, learning that is lifelong, and the desire to be a community of learners – key components of a learning organization as described by Senge. For example:

> [College] creates a student-centered, community-based environment where people engage as partners in learning, empowering them to become productive, literate and responsible members of a diverse society.
>
> As a teaching/learning community, we come together and strive to meet the needs, aspirations, and goals of our changing student population and communities.
>
> As a learning community, we at [College] approach this task with enthusiasm, optimism, and confidence in our ability to serve students and the community in a manner consistent with our most fundamental values: achieving educational excellence, maintaining the needs of students as our central focus in determining policies and practices, providing a cooperative and collegial environment, and supporting individual dignity, worth and the potential for growth.
>
> [College] empowers students to learn and empowers our educational team – faculty, staff, and administration – to create powerful learning environments. . . . We provide an environment where persons of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds become partners in learning.

As Senge has noted, awareness alone is not sufficient to make substantive change. Colleges must master and employ specific skills to think and act systemically. In this respect, colleges face some formidable obstacles, such as an historic resistance to change (Toombs, 1991). Faculty and staff are especially resistant to theories which emerge from the corporate sector and are applied to an academic environment. There is also a persistent belief among many community college faculty and staff that they are and always have been "learning institutions." Any suggestion to the contrary is, in their opinion, primarily the result of poor public relations ((Roueche, 1997, p. 5). Nevertheless, the leadership within the system has a general grasp of the need for change; it is the dominant theme among key community college organizations and at conferences statewide. There are two structures which are most often discussed as needing substantive change if California community colleges are to provide present and future students with access to a quality education: (1) funding and (2) governance.

FUNDING

Funding is an all consuming issue and perceived by many within the system as the central issue for community colleges. Indeed, community colleges have good reason to be concerned about funding. More so that any other segment of public education in the state of California, community colleges have not been adequately funded since the "golden age" of the post-World War II period when community colleges were created at the rate of rate of one per week in the 1960s (Vaughn in Fox, 1989, p. 3) and funded at a level sufficient to support that growth. The community college system has long been underfunded compared to K-12, the University of California and the California State University. Community colleges would have needed to receive an additional $800 million in 1995 to equal the smallest of the cumulative increases in the other segments. Moreover, California spends less than the national average on community colleges. In 1994, California spent $3,554 per student while the national average was $6,022 (Council, 1997). Overall, the state Chancellor's office estimates that the community colleges are funded at only 53% of their actual operational costs.

It is true that funding for community colleges has shown marked improvement in the last two years as the state has recovered from a serious recession and property tax revenues have met or exceeded state projections. However, for many colleges, it is a question of restoring, not expanding, programs and services that were eliminated or reduced in the budget cuts that characterized the late 1980s and early 1990s. Moreover, an increasingly larger share of the colleges' state apportionment is being distributed as categorical funds, i.e., restricted to specific expenditures. In most cases, these categorical funds are one-time allocations and largely earmarked for equipment and instructional learning materials. This means that colleges have less latitude to plan long term, especially in respect to staffing.

It is not likely that community colleges or any other segment of public education will be funded at the level desired by educators simply because there are now many more competing demands upon discretionary public resources, for example, the penal system. To illustrate, from 1975 to 1995, as community college participation rates decreased from 88 to 58 per 1,000 adults, the incarceration rate increased from 92 to 392 per 100,000 adults. The cost to educate one community college student is $3,500 per year; the cost to incarcerate one individual is $23,500 per year (Task Force for the Chancellor's Consultation Council, 1997). Whether the pie grows or shrinks, it must be cut into many more slices. In spite of the current and projected needs in the areas of education, justice, health and welfare, the current legislature supports returning some excess revenue to the public in the form of tax cuts rather than investing it in the state infrastructure.

Some solutions were proposed by a state Chancellor's task force in a report, *2005: A Report of the Task Force for the Chancellor's Consultation Council.* Primarily, they have to do with developing alternative sources of revenue and maximizing existing ones, including:

- Institutionalizing the Proposition 98 split, which balances funding between K-12 and community colleges.
- Changing laws governing local bond elections to allow for passage by a majority vote, instead of two-thirds. Further, allowing funds to be used to equip buildings as well as construct them.
- Controlling increases in student fees.
- Increasing public-private partnerships
- Maximizing federal revenue.

- Revising existing tax laws to provide for tax increases and funding for all levels of public education.

Additionally, California Community Colleges would benefit from a more realistic and stable funding formula and a master plan that would give colleges more direction in terms of how much growth will be supported by the state.

An issue just as important as revenue is how community colleges will allocate the resources they do have and over which they have discretionary control. Successful allocation of resources will help colleges better fulfill their missions, meet the needs of their communities, provide current and quality programs and services, adequately prepare students for the workplace, improve student access and success, -- in short, remain a viable source of higher education for all adult residents of the state. Failure to effectively and efficiently allocate resources can threaten the very survival of some colleges and reduce access to higher education even further.

Thus, there are two major systemic issues in respect to funding. One is external and has to do with state and federal funding formulas and policies, over which colleges feel they have little control. The other is internal and has to do with the systems colleges develop to allocate resources over which they do have control.

GOVERNANCE

What complicates the process of resource allocation for many colleges is the shared governance environment in which they must operate per Assembly Bill 1725, passed in 1988. AB 1725 defined the roles of key constituencies – faculty, administration, and students in college decision-making processes. Although a careful reading of the legislation reveals that

local boards continue to retain all final decision making authority, they must nevertheless agree, for example, to recognize the primary authority of the academic senate in matters of curriculum and give due consideration to the senate's recommendations. Most, if not all, colleges have a shared governance system that includes not only faculty and administration, but also classified staff and students and sometimes unions.

Implementation of AB 1725 has not been smooth. As colleges re-examined their governance structures in a time of dwindling resources and budget cutbacks, previously unresolved and new issues of power and control surfaced. The situation was further complicated by the fact that most California community colleges have collective bargaining. Whether and how unions participate in shared governance became a thorny issue. Hammering out local shared governance agreements became an end unto itself rather than a tool for decision making. Finally, the shared governance system was imposed upon colleges without enough consideration given to pre-existing systems, such as the traditional discipline-based organization system, which tends to discourage cross disciplinary collaboration.

While there is much that is valuable about a system of decision making that encourages, if not requires, the input and buy-in of all affected parties, the biggest drawback of this system is its inefficiency. Decisions can take an inordinate amount of time. Community colleges, caught in the whitewater turbulence of change, must behave like speedboats, not super tankers. They are under increasing pressure to respond quickly to changes that can have significant impact on their mission if not their survival. A survey of articles in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* conveys the enormity of some of these changes: "Arizona Considers Landmark Plan to Allow Community Colleges to Offer Baccalaureate Degrees (January 16, 1998), "Colorado Community Colleges Plan Degree to Be Offered Entirely Over the Internet (November 28, 1997), "For-Profit

Higher Education Sees Booming Enrollments and Revenues (January 23, 1998), "Higher-Education Systems as Cartels: The End is Near," (October 1, 1997), "Rethinking the Role of the Professor in an Age of High-Tech Tools," (October 3, 1997). Community colleges no longer have the luxury of spending years creating new programs and services because students have more options, including proprietary schools such as the University of Phoenix or university extension programs. The systems supporting these alternative educational institutions are designed to permit the flexibility and autonomy that enable rapid response to student demand. Shared governance and its consultative framework is a much less responsive system.

A recent example of the impact of shared governance can be found in the nine-college Los Angeles Community College District, a huge and troubled system that has been on the state's financial "watch list" since 1987. After one year as chancellor of the district, Bill Segura resigned, citing the governance structure of both the district and the state as the reason. "Like many of his colleagues statewide, Dr. Segura blames a state law that directs administrators to consult with constituencies on academic and professional matters. The district has seven unions, a system-wide academic senate, senates on each campus, and other advisory groups – most of which want a voice in decisions" (Healy, 1997, p. A33). Also included in the mix is the District's elected board of trustees, student senates and classified senates.

Yet, shared governance or shared decision-making should work. It is the kind of collaborative process which is one of the cornerstones of a learning organization and should put community colleges in an excellent position to achieve their goal of becoming learning organizations. Unfortunately, for shared governance to be effective, participants need to have communication skills and systems knowledge. They need to be exposed to and provided with sustained practice in the core disciplines that are necessary in a true learning organization:

personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, and team learning. Few colleges have systematically implemented the kind of training that is necessary. Precisely because of the discipline-based organizational structure, and in spite of shared governance, most faculty have little experience in operating as part of a team. For faculty, the term implies committee work. As Davis (1995, pp. 76-77) observes, "Most faculty have served on committees and the experience has not always been pleasant. . . . Often . . . committee work is filled with frustration, conflict, and the resulting sense of an enormous waste of time . . . For some faculty, the sense of revulsion is so great that they prefer to stay in their office or to study at home, working quietly alone, reminding themselves that this is why they became a professor in the first place."

Systemically, then, the community colleges have in place a system – shared governance – which can provide the philosophical basis and practical means of creating a true learning organization. In most cases, however, participants have not received the training necessary to make shared governance as effective a decision-making process as it could be. Consequently, a disproportionate amount of time and energy have been spent on defining and structuring the governance system instead of using it to solve problems and plan for the future.

LEARNING DISABILITIES WITHIN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEMS OF FUNDING AND GOVERNANCE

Although academia is mostly skeptical of theories that they perceive to be nonacademic, e.g., corporate, there is nevertheless much insight that can be gained by examining common problems from another point of view, in this case from a systems perspective. This section will

examine three issues of funding and governance through the lens of Senge's learning disabilities theory.

I AM MY POSITION.

> When asked what they do for a living, most people describe the tasks they perform every day, not the purpose of the greater enterprise in which they take part. Most see themselves within a "system" over which they have little or no influence. They "do their job," put in their time, and try to cope with the forces outside of their control. Consequently, they tend to see their responsibilities as limited to the boundaries of their position. (Senge, 1990, p.18)

Community colleges, like nearly all institutions of higher education, are highly stratified systems. They are organized around disciplines, each discipline being an entity unto itself, with its own organizational structure, membership, and scope of authority. This method of organization is sometimes referred to as the stovepipe or smokestack model (Senge, 1990, p. 24), vertical "tubes" which may arise from the same structure but which do not touch. Within each discipline, there is a clear class structure. Faculty are generally perceived to be those with the most authority. AB 1725 both reinforces and formalizes this perception in terms of institutional governance.

> Throughout the legislation, the faculty and Academic Senate were designated with specific authority and roles in implementing the reforms. As such, faculty involvement in the institution's governance processes was seen as a fundamental to the success of all of the AB 1725 reforms (California 1988, section 70(a]). For example, local governing boards were required to involve faculty in the development of procedures and decisions in the areas of professional employment standards, course approval, curricula and other academic issues. (Griffin, 1997)

The difficulty arises from the fact that the first allegiance of faculty is generally to their discipline and it is for their discipline and program they advocate. Although faculty may serve on college-wide committees, task forces, and governance groups, they tend to speak, assess, and

make decisions on the basis of what will benefit their own area, not the college as a whole. Middle managers – division chairs and instructional deans, for example, -- also tend to act locally rather than globally. They are typically responsible for groups of disciplines for which they have ultimate responsibility for all functions such as budgeting and staffing. Their success is more often measured in terms of what resources they are able to provide to their departments, not necessarily in terms of their contribution to the common good of the institution. Even at the vice presidential level, there is typically a division between instruction and student services, with instruction tacitly assumed to have higher status than support services. Thus, when it comes to resource allocation, whatever process a college may use to prioritize expenditures will reflect the system's inherent emphasis on local advocacy. It then falls to the chief executive officer, the president, to ensure that a myriad of individual decisions work for the betterment of the entire institution.

This learning disability can be a serious impediment for colleges which desire to become learning organizations. Given the complexity of the challenges that face community colleges, the traditional discipline-based organizational system may prove to be unworkable as colleges tackle complex problems that cut across traditional organizational structures.

THE ENEMY IS OUT THERE.

As Senge points out, "the 'enemy is out there' syndrome is actually a by-product of 'I am my position' and the nonsystemic ways of looking at the world that it fosters" (Senge, 1990, p. 19). For California community colleges, there is one principal enemy with many tentacles: the state. In respect to governance, California's education code is legendary. Moreover, Title 5, the

regulations which govern the community colleges, is a permissive code. That is, colleges cannot implement a policy or procedure unless the code specifically permits it.

> In the California Education Code alone, there are currently over 1,200 statues that directly regulate and affect the affairs of community colleges. This ponderous code doesn't even include the 640 regulations adopted by the board of governors, and the hundred and hundreds of federal statutes and regulations that govern the specific activities of colleges. . . . 'The California Community Colleges are micro-managed as much or more than any other higher education institutions in the country.' (Nussbaum in O'Banion, 1997, p. 13)

Such micro-managing has deleterious effects on the system's perception that it can exert some control over its destiny as well as on its ability to make creative and substantive systemic changes.

In respect to funding, California community colleges as noted above, have become accustomed to an inappropriate, ill-timed and inconsistent budget process and policies. Colleges must build budgets in the spring for the upcoming academic year without knowing their revenue until many months later, in August. By that time, fall schedules are set and spring schedules are being built. Should the state attach conditions for new money such as growth, colleges have very little ability to make substantive changes until spring and summer, typically periods of lower enrollment than fall. It is also not unusual for the state to come back to colleges a year or more later and ask that funding be "returned." Even though the funding situation has markedly improved over the last two years, community colleges continue to be underfunded compared to the other segments of education. Further, new money that is coming to the college is primarily categorical and one-time. Colleges have less discretion over the use of funding that comes from the state and looming on the horizon is the state Chancellor's proposal to adopt performance-based funding.

Senge points out, however, that "out there and in here are usually part of a single system. The learning disability makes it almost impossible to detect the leverage which we can use in here on problems that straddle the boundary between us and out there" (Senge, 1990, p. 20). For traditional, organizationally fragmented colleges, their leverage lies in their ability to control their own allocation systems and their relative freedom to seek alternative sources of funding. It is very difficult to create systems which help members learn how to look at the bigger picture, much less educate faculty and staff as to the means by which they can exert more control over a system they perceive to be completely "out there."

THE DELUSION OF LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE.

One of the challenges of teaching is that teachers do not often see the end results of their efforts. The effects of the interaction between the instructor and students may not be manifested for weeks, months, or years afterward. Likewise, administrative decisions within academia can have far- reaching effects which occur long after the decision has been made and the administrator has moved on. That time delay plus the fact that institutional memory is usually short means that we don't always experience the consequences of our decisions. Therefore, we do not really have an opportunity to learn from them.

In the mid-1980s, just prior to the onset of a national recession which would hit California especially hard, the chancellor of a two-college community college district proposed and obtained board approval for two major benefits: a 10% across-the-board salary increase and lifetime medical benefits for employees and their immediate families. They were hugely popular decisions and few in management, if any, appeared to have played out the long-term effects. Shortly thereafter, the chancellor left, as did several key staff in the finance office. Several years

later, as the recession began to squeeze the college budget, it became apparent that the decision had long-term negative repercussions which were exacerbated when an IRS ruling required employers to report contractual commitments such as pensions and health benefits as liabilities. It suddenly became clear that the district could in no way afford the cost of the benefits. However, college employees initially saw it as a "district" problem, not recognizing that the district and colleges were a single system. What was a district problem would eventually become a college problem. There would be less money available for future pay increases or operating expenses. By that time, those who had initiated the proposal and some of the board members who had approved it were gone. Therefore, there was no learning on their part. The learning, however, did occur among remaining staff who suddenly found themselves in a serious fiscal crisis that would ultimately result in the elimination or reduction of programs, the elimination of 40 certificated and classified positions within the district, and the reduction of operating budgets to the bare minimum.

This example is one instance in which systemic thinking and the use of microworlds, or simulations, might have prevented or at least lessened a serious fiscal crisis which produced its own longer-term repercussions.

SYSTEMS ARCHETYPES

One of Senge's major points is the need to be aware of structures which hold us prisoner. However, awareness in itself is not sufficient. "It [awareness] may lead to solving a problem, but it will not change the thinking that produced the problem in the first place" (Senge, 1990, p. 95). In order to change thinking, Senge calls for managers to think in terms of systems archetypes or patterns. Using archetypes will "recondition our perceptions, so as to be more

able to see structures at play, and to see the leverage in those structures" (Senge, 1990, p. 95). Senge notes that researchers have identified about a dozen systems archetypes, all of which are made up of the basic building blocks of systems: reinforcing processes, balancing process, and delays. The final section of this paper will examine several of these archetypes within a community college environment: limits to growth, shifting the burden, fixes that fail, and success to the successful, and growth and underinvestment.

LIMITS TO GROWTH

This archetype describes a process which "feeds on itself to produce a period of accelerating growth or expansion. Then the growth begins to slow (often inexplicably to the participants in the system) and eventually comes to a halt and may even reverse itself and begin an accelerating collapse." The growth is the result of a reinforcing feedback process; the limit "can be a resource restraint or an external or internal response to growth" (Senge, 1990, p. 379).

A good example within the community college system is the Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree holders. Since their inception, community colleges had served degree holding students who were returning either for personal enrichment or more often, to learn new skills to adapt to a changing job market. As more BA holders sought continuing education at community colleges, more programs and services were developed to meet their needs, which in turn attracted more BA students. However, as California's recession deepened and colleges were forced to make significant cutbacks, the legislature decided that limited space should go first to non-degree holding students. To discourage BA holders from attending community colleges, a $50/unit enrollment fee (vs. the $13/unit paid by non-degree holding students) was instituted statewide. The result of this limiting force was an immediate decline in the enrollment of BA holders. For a

short period of time, it did not appear to be problematic, but as California moved out of the recession and the shift was toward growth, colleges discovered that they had lost access to a significant population. The management principle for this archetype is "don't push on the reinforcing (growth) process, remove (or weaken) the source of limitation" (Senge, 1990, p. 380). Indeed, it was fruitless to spend resources in recruitment. It made more sense to eliminate the obstacle. In this case, the fee was finally eliminated, but many colleges have yet to recover all of the students they lost. Although the fee has not been in effect for several years, my experience in the community shows that many BA holders are still under the impression that the fee persists and more damaging, that they are "not wanted" by their local college – which had no say in the legislative decision to impose the fee in the first place.

SHIFTING THE BURDEN AND FIXES THAT FAIL

These two archetypes are closely related. "Shifting the Burden" is described by Senge as "a short-term 'solution,' [which] is used to correct a problem, with seemingly positive immediate results. As the correction is used more and more, more fundamental, long-term corrective measures are used less and less. Over time the capabilities for the fundamental solution may atrophy or become disabled, leading to even greater reliance on the symptomatic solution" (Senge, 1990, p. 381).

Related to Shifting the Burden is the archetype, "Fixes that Fail." This archetype is described as a fix which, though effective in the short term, has unforeseen long-term consequences which may require even more use of the same fix. In both these archetypes, the management solution is similar. Focus on the fundamental and the long-term solution. Use symptomatic and short-term solutions only to buy time (Senge, 1990, pp. 381, 389).

An example of these archetypes in action is relying upon enrollments generated during the summer to make up for losses incurred during the fall and spring semesters. After years of cutting back programs and services, California community colleges are now required to grow in order to qualify for additional funding. State apportionments to colleges are determined on the number of full-time equivalent students (FTES) the college generates. Colleges must meet and then exceed the number of FTES served the prior year. If they do not, eventually their apportionment will be proportionately and permanently decreased. In order to ensure that they meet their goal and preserve their base funding, some colleges have used FTES generated during summer school to backfill. In most cases, summer school FTES can be used either for the previous academic year or the upcoming academic year. Ideally, a college would want to apply those FTES to the upcoming year. However, many colleges have found themselves forced to borrow against summer FTES to ensure that goals are met during the current academic year. In essence, colleges are borrowing against future income. However, this is at best a short-term and symptomatic solution. It does not address the fundamental causes nor does it provide a long-term solution. Eventually, and unless luck is a factor, colleges which shift the burden and fail to find long-term fixes will find themselves in a fiscal crisis.

SUCCESS TO THE SUCCESSFUL

"Success to the Successful" is an archetype wherein two activities compete for limited support or resources. The more successful one activity becomes, the more support it gains, thereby starving the other. When applied to entities rather than activities, it is closely related to the archetype of escalation, wherein two people or organizations each see their welfare as depending on a relative advantage over the other. Their competition becomes increasingly

aggressive and results in a buildup that goes far beyond what either had anticipated or wanted (Senge, 1990, pp. 385-6). These archetypes are frequently found in multi-college districts which more often than not resemble dysfunctional families.

A specific example would be a recent confrontation over new growth money between the two colleges of a multi-college district. The younger and smaller of the two colleges asserted that it was in a better position to grow and preserve the district's apportionment, if not increase it. Therefore, this college proposed that it receive 100% of the anticipated growth money and its sister college receive none. Its sister college predictably challenged such an assumption but in the absence of effective district leadership, the debate continued far longer than it should have. As Senge points out, to pursue this line of thinking results in setting into motion a reinforcing spiral fueling growth of the first college and starving the second, a situation which in the long run weakens all three entities. The managerial response should be to break the link between the two so that they do not compete for the same resources (Senge, 1990, pp. 385-6). Given the funding system for districts, this is not possible. However, another response could have been for district leadership to establish the expectation that neither college would be hamstrung so that the entire district would not be crippled. Ultimately, but reluctantly, the colleges agreed to a 65/35 split.

GROWTH AND UNDERINVESTMENT

This archetype is described as one in which "growth approaches a limit which can be eliminated or pushed into the future if the firm invests in additional capacity. But the investment must be aggressive and sufficiently rapid to forestall reduced growth, or else it will never get made. If such investment does not occur, performance standards are lowered, which in turn

lowers expectations, which continues to result in lowered performance" (Senge, 1990, pp. 389-90). In this case, if there is a genuine potential for growth, Senge advocates that capacity be built in advance of demand as one strategy for creating demand. The management response is to maintain the vision.

In the late 1980s, a community college committed to building a technology center, believing that such a center would help the college expand its career programs and attract students from all majors to a state-of-the-art facility. Shortly thereafter, the college was plunged into a fiscal crisis which necessitated a 10% reduction in its operating budget within one year, this after years of making deep cuts into operating budgets. Nevertheless, the president clung to the vision of the technology center and he and his administrative team worked hard to obtain commitment from the campus community that scarce dollars would be used to complete the dream. The plans for the technology center went forward, as did a significant investment in a campus wide fiber-optic backbone. It was not easy and commitment frequently wavered, but in 1995, the facility was completed and became a significant source of income (FTES) and an indispensable component in academic as well as vocational programs.

CONCLUSION

In spite of the skepticism with which many academics approach systems theory, there is much that this science can teach a complex system like that of the California community colleges. Given the need to meet the needs of 400,000 additional students within the next decade and provide them with knowledge and skills for careers that do not yet exist, the community colleges must be able to focus their energies on meeting student needs. Systems such as funding and governance must support this endeavor, not detract from it. Although many colleges have

heightened awareness of themselves as systems, few have developed the capabilities of their faculty and staff to think and act systemically, to spot learning disabilities and archetypes, and to use that knowledge to find creative and long-term solutions that will enhance the learning process. If community colleges are to become the learning organizations they strive to be, their first commitment should be to the education of their own faculty and staff in systems thinking and practices.

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